

University and the Formation of Greek Elites: Past and Present

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Abstract: This article analyzes the history of university studies in relation with the establishment of the Greek elites from the mid-19th century until today, based on primary and secondary sources and on available statistical data. Particular attention is given to studies at universities abroad and to students' pathways. By examining the prominent position of the elites among students abroad we pose the question to what extent there has been a pattern change since the past. We highlight that the possession of a degree adds power to one's personal course, especially in two periods (early 1860s until mid-1890s, end of 1950s until mid-1980s). A common feature of these periods is the upward structural social mobility. During the first and especially the second period, shortages in certain professions, along with state expansion, led to the increase in demand for degrees, aside from immediate graduate absorption. The article also ascertains that lately a «reservoir» with a significant number of foreign studied Greeks has «accumulated» abroad. Though comparable with the case in other European countries, this becomes noteworthy when taking into account the relatively smaller Greek population. This mobility concerned a reasoned economic choice, together with being attributed to the social value attached to education. Simultaneously, it was linked to the expectation of global quality education, acquisition of a personal cultural experience, along with improved credentials that create better professional prospects and high income. Nonetheless, in the case of certain groups, this mobility was governed by the spirit of a family tradition and the reproduction of social and cultural capital.

Keywords: elites; State; social mobility; higher education; students abroad.

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1. Introduction

This article focuses on the access of various social groups in Greece to universities abroad with the aim of investigating the formation and development of

elites in the country. The term «elite» is used not in Pareto's sense (Busino, 2000, Aron, 1967) but in the sense of ruling class. For reasons related to the formation and evolution of the nation-state, state mechanisms and political parties in Greece, have proved to be of primary importance in decision-making. This has been attributed to fundamental events, such as the Civil War (1946-1949) and the occasional imposition of military regimes, most notably the junta of 1967.

During the period examined, university graduates, especially those who had studied abroad, played a decisive role for the formation of state mechanisms and the staffing of political parties. This explains why we focus in the first place on the trajectories of Greek students abroad in the 19th century and today in order to see how the dominant social groups were shaped and whether there have been changes in this process over time. At the same time, we aim to understand the trajectories of the graduates.

In the relevant literature, international student mobility is also viewed as part of the movement of a global elite which works having the purpose to accumulate capital, to create networks and interconnections, to reproduce a cosmopolitan viewpoint and generally to create positive and privileged potential for those it concerns (Beaverstock, 2012, p. 240). More particularly, in regard to this, it has also been claimed that for the wealthy social classes, study abroad contributes to class reproduction through the accumulation of cultural and social capital and through the bonds that are forged during studying at «reputed» institutions (Waters, 2006). Findlay (2011) and Murphy-Lejeune (2002) focused on the special adaptability («willingness and readiness») of the elite to changes in the environment they live in, whether these changes concern matters, such as language, ways and/or work culture.

Other researchers (Calhoun, 2003 & 2008) focus on the effects of studying abroad in terms of economic inequality and power relations. The contemporary cosmopolitan perspective is analyzed as a source of power in the age of globalization which leads to the acquisition of privileged positions. Through a critical approach, those researching this trend make use of Bourdieu's positions on cultural capital (Igarashi & Saito, 2014; Lareau & Weininger, 2004). Therefore, studying abroad was linked with the acquisition of a dominant position by individuals who are open to different cultural experiences (Nowicka & Rovisco, 2009), while at the same time they have developed skills which allow them to work together with individuals from different countries with whom, finally, they have developed similar («global») cultural and social behavior.

Certainly, the pool of Greeks studying abroad, as well as the formation of the elites at home, is influenced by the wider political developments both within and beyond the national borders. At this point we should stress the particular role educational policy in Greece plays historically in terms of the distribution of economic, cultural and social capital. We acknowledge that, to an extent, mobility is linked to the role of the educational system in Greece and its ability to function as a central institutional mechanism of integration, of confronting exclusion and, above all, of restricting the unequal distribution of the benefits of education.

2. Greek graduates and overseas University studies

2.1. Students through time: Fundamental trends

Some central points illustrate two facts: the continuing value accorded to higher education in Greece, despite whatever fluctuations there may be in its size, and the continuing presence of a large number of young Greeks in universities overseas:

- a. The number of Greek students at institutions at home, compared with international data, was high from the 1860s until the mid-1890s; remained almost stable for the first four decades of the 20th century; increased, although not at a fast pace, from the mid-1950s until the early 1980s; and then increased significantly, particularly from the end of the 1990s; now ranging slightly higher than the European average (Kiprianos, 1995 & 2016).
- b. The number of Greek undergraduate and postgraduate students, at institutions overseas remains high. It approached 1,000 in the mid-1920s, this being equivalent to 1/10 of students at home; it took on greater dimensions from the end of the 1950s until the 1980s; and, with fluctuations today it rises above 30,000, in other words, 6%-7% of students studying at home (Kiprianos, 1995, & 2016).
- c. Besides recurrent exceptions, particularly in the 1960s, and the early 1970s, educational inequalities are significant. This holds true chiefly for the interwar period as well as the last three decades. In short, the vast majority of home and graduates, with the partial exception of the 1960s and 1970s, come from the social strata with the greatest economic and cultural wealth (Kiprianos, 1995, Kiprianos, 2007).
- d. Despite the fluctuations, after the Second World War significant student mobility for overseas study is noted. However, recently the economic crisis seems to restrict the magnitude of geographic mobility for Greek students, particularly at undergraduate level studies and for destinations with fees and a high cost of living. Actually, it is claimed that the crisis has influenced the extent and nature of youth mobility in multiple ways for those in the two extreme categories. Generally, on the one hand it encourages the exodus for studies of privileged (economically, cognitively, culturally) young people, as well as parts of the middle class who, despite the sudden drop in income, support education as a value-based choice. On the other hand, though the crisis encourages the exodus of individuals who come from those sections of society hindered by limited opportunities, their choice for departure is mainly related to seeking for a job (Kimourtzis, 2016).
- e. In the globalized environment of the last decades, tertiary education in Greece is facing challenges, and as being under pressure, it is obliged to change «roles» and to become transformed. It is being called on to meet needs on a local, national and international level, but when this isn't feasible, the students seek the desired solution elsewhere: either because competition for the «well-thought-of» cognitive objects is out of proportion with the places available or because the quality of studies overseas

is seen as higher in comparison, or because it is provided through an internationalized environment and is likely to be linked to a degree which is highly accepted due to the standing of the university, or even because it is part of a social, family, or professional tradition that is already supported by high school studies. However, in times of economic crisis, the privilege of choice between global, national or local is mainly founded on the use of private funds and/or the utilization of cognitive, social and cultural capital, while only a limited share concerns other types of opportunities (Kimourtzis, 2016).

2.2. Foreign educated Greeks in highly ranked positions: 19th-mid 20th Century

Starting from the view that the elite is usually characterized as the «chosen ones» within a social group (according to others, the «privileged few», the «topmost», the «outstanding» or even the «talented» depending on the categorization), in this section we investigate the place/country of study for the members of powerful professional groups, as well as for categories of public figures, as we believe that the «chosen» are linked to aspects that concern power (intellectual, economic, state, political). These are members of socially reputable groups, for whom we have some fragmentary data: university professors, politicians, freelance professionals and businessmen. Besides, prior to the Second World War, only few graduates from foreign institutions remained in the country of their studies. This is a common international practice, given that degrees obtained from foreign institutions represent «passports» for social and professional recognition at home.

3. University professors

University professors, few in number until the Second World War, enjoy high social esteem and many of them occupy public office and political positions. More specifically:

- a. At the University of Athens in the 19th century, of the 160 academic teachers since its founding and until 1900: 53% had studied in Germany and Austria (16% of those had passed through another European university), and 40% in France and other countries (Lappas, 2004, pp. 150-1).
- b. At the National Technical University of Athens (NTUA) according to the biographies of the 136 academic teachers, since its founding and until 1916, 90 studied abroad. Of those: 34 in Germany, 29 in France, and 12 in France and some other country (Biris, 1957, pp. 485-546). The picture changes only slightly in the years that followed, beyond the fact of a somewhat larger presence of those who studied in Germany in relation to those who had studied in France. Of the 63 professors at NTUA in the twenty years from 1922 to 1941, 50 had undertaken their main or more advanced studies at foreign universities and polytechnics: 26 in Germany, 15 in France, 7 in Switzerland, 1 in Belgium and 1 in Italy (Antoniou, 2006, p. 240).

- c. In the Agricultural school, and among the agronomists, the presence of those who had studied in France was greater. Up to the end of the 19th century, 31 out of the 52 Greek agronomists had studied in France (Paris, Montpellier, and chiefly, Grignon), 4 in France and in a second country, 5 in Belgium, in the French-speaking city of Gembloux, 7 in Germany and 3 in the United States (Kallivretakis, 1990, pp. 146-48). There is a similar picture in the Agricultural School, which was founded in 1920 as a Farming School. Of the 33 professors there until 1937, 16 studied in Greek higher education institutions, 14 abroad, while we do not have data for the remaining 3. Of the 14 who studied 4 studied in Germany, 4 in France, 3 in Belgium, 1 in Italy, 1 in the USA and 1 in Istanbul. Also, 23 of the 33 possessed postgraduate titles, 13 possessed a title similar to today's Master of Science (MSc) and 4 a PhD. Of the 33 holders of postgraduate degrees, 17 had gained them overseas (Germany: 9, Belgium: 3, France: 2, Austria: 1, Italy: 1 and England: 1). Finally, of the 13 with an MSc, 9 were funded by a Greek state scholarship (Panagiotopoulos, 2004, pp. 123-132).

4. Dominant economic group (professionals, public officials, businessmen)

The picture for the dominant economic group is similar, in other words, individuals with studies abroad show higher participation, yet, this is more in favor of those who studied in Germany:

- a. Until about the Second World War, most engineers, with the exception of civil engineers, had studied overseas. Of the 2,035 engineers registered at the Technical Chamber of Greece (TEE) in 1933, 34% had studied overseas. More specifically, 100% of the nautical engineers (16 in total), 97% of the electrical engineers (111 out of a total of 114) and 90% of the mineralogists (36 out of a total of 40) (Agriantoni, 2002, pp. 272-73).
- b. Amongst the significant Greek businessmen, the presence of these groups is even more impressive. At a time when university titles were rare and in this specific period were held by no more than 3% of the relevant age group, between 1900-1940: 101 of the 148 most powerful businessmen in Greece were holders of university, or similar, titles. 60 of those, in other words, 6 out of 10, studied overseas, in Germany and Switzerland a fortiori, while 41 studied in Athens (Vaxevanoglou, 1994, p. 143).
- c. Regarding the graduates' pathways according to the country of their studies, we know that until the Second World War almost all of the dominant groups in Greece studied in European, German-speaking and French-speaking, countries, more in France and fewer in Germany. We have indications that the share of the German-speaking is greater than that of the French-speaking. This is linked mainly to the following professional pathways of the students. More than those who studied in France, those who studied in Germany are directed to the state, while before going overseas, they

- had been state officials, or became such on their return. They are mainly those in the military, teachers and engineers, who as state officials bear an influential role in government decision making.
- d. Something similar occurs in the domain of the economy. From 1900 to 1940, six out of the ten most prominent businessmen had studied in Germany and Switzerland. Beyond the individual characteristics of the graduates, this has to do with the reputation of German speaking universities, as they attract a specific public and achieve a relevant tradition. The most well-known group is the «Zurich Circle», a group of young people whose members studied at the Polytechnic of Zurich and on their return developed intense business activity. Its members established and headed some of the largest and longest-lasting Greek industries and businesses (Antoniou, 2006, pp. 177-8).
 - e. The strong presence in the economy of those who studied in Germany is certainly also linked to the constantly strengthening presence, above all economic, of Germany in Greece as from the end of the 19th century, and the surpassing, during interwar years, of until then uncontested British domination. In these circumstances, most of those who studied in France headed mostly to the «private» sector, practicing freelance professions, such as lawyers and architects, or becoming involved in arts and sciences.

5. Politicians

A similar situation is reflected on the political field. A thorough study of the composition of the category of politicians, especially those at the top, is still missing. From research (Kiprianos, 2016) of various sources, conventional and electronic, it was ascertained that out of the 21 Prime Ministers in the period 1930-1940, at least 12 has studied at western European universities (Germany: 10, London and then Paris: 1, Paris military school: 1). Of the 10 who had studied in Germany, 6 continued their studies for a period of time in Paris.

From the aforementioned, it is assumed that the share of those who had studied at foreign universities was crucial for the shaping of groups of leaders until at least the Second World War. However, we shouldn't remain with this first impression. We know that at least after the 1920s, and with the exception of the 1960s and to a lesser degree the 1970s, students are, in the majority, heirs (Kiprianos, 2016). However, this finding requires further analysis, in particular through the understanding of the «value significance of the degree».

5.1. *Student trajectories in foreign universities: Accumulation of Greek students since the mid-20th century*

In this chapter light is shed on aspects that concern the mobility of Greek students and their exodus from Greece after the Second World War, taking into consideration the perspective between national and international, and that of a choice between

the established circumstances within the country, the search for educational (and then professional) opportunities overseas or even of a cosmopolitan approach which encourages national myth making about the behavior of Greek elite. Clearly, after the Second World War all the more people stay in the country of their studies, the United States in the first place as well as countries in Europe, in order to work for a period of time, or permanently. Hence, a new phenomenon gradually emerges as significant, the attraction or (depending on the point of view) exodus of the most capable (brain drain). This phenomenon changes the present circumstances and is reflected, to some extent, in the shaping of the dominant groups on a national scale.

Studies, as well as estimates based on the available data suggest that during this period the mobility of students who leave Greece to study abroad constitutes an interesting case. A case worth considering both in terms of quantity and because of its qualitative features (Kimourtzis, 2015, 2016). Mainly however, it is noted that student mobility constitutes part of a steady «accumulation» of Greeks with high qualifications abroad.

It is also noted that right after the Second World War, extremely small funding for education and scientific research in Greece, in connection with the friendly academic environment, as well as increased – even generous – state funding for research within the framework of the «defense against the Soviet danger», made countries in western Europe, as well as the USA and Canada, destinations for a potentially valuable human resource from Greece, amongst whom were a number of the educated who made up part of the elite in their destination country¹. Later, from the 1960s and on, mobility for educational purposes continued, at times more intensely, at others more limited. Actually, overseas studies became a means of upward social mobility, considering that holders of particular foreign study titles enjoyed high status in Greece. For others they were an opportunity which was determined by broader developments (i.e. Greek dictatorship, presence of transnational companies, EEC integration, overseas presence of a highly specialized professional elite², globalized education, economic crisis). For the most powerful socio-economic groups, mobility constituted a choice for the maintenance of their socio-economic and/or political standing and inheritance.

In particular, in terms of student movements from the early 1990s and on, we should point out:

- a. From OECD data for 2012 it emerges that among 210 countries in a world of 3.4 million students studying in OECD countries, Greece (with 35,217 individuals) ranks in the 23rd place with the largest number of students overseas, while in the past it was ranked even higher (2001: 4th place out of 196 countries with 55,074 individuals in the global community of 1.5 million students overseas).

¹ See: the case of «scholarship students» such as Ahrweiler, Axelos, Kastoriadis, Kondylis, Kriaras, Proveleggios, Svoronos, and others who as passengers on the historic troop ship «Mataroa» fled pre-civil war Greece as they were seeking for an intellectual (and political) alternative and as a fact, they emerged as very important figures in their fields (philosophy, architecture, legal science, medicine, poetry, painting).

² For example, academics, diplomats, European officials, managers, businessmen.

- b. The recent movements took place within a framework of intense globalization and mobility towards every corner on the globe, although the geographic concentration in countries with high level studies, better economic performance, improved prospects for finding a job and in which high skills are linked to high salaries, as well as prospects for prosperity, stands out. As far as the countries of destination of Greeks who study abroad is concerned (2012), first among the choices of Greek students as destinations are EU countries (9 out of 10 Greek students who study abroad), in particular the United Kingdom, Germany, Italy and France together gather 71.6% of the Greeks who select tertiary education at an institution abroad.
- c. Especially in the fields of Science and Technology (S & T), Greeks who studied overseas make up a critical mass of the scientific work force, which is granted the opportunity to integrate «better», «faster» and «higher» into a globalized «educational», «scientific» and «professional» elite. More specifically, as far as the USA is concerned, the Greek presence is comparable to that of larger European countries, while this became more intense in the 1990s. Between 1991 and 2011, Greek nationals who had gained PhDs in S & T fields from the USA were more in number than the relevant French and Italian cases. This comparison should be considered in relation to large population differences between Greece and these countries, as well as with their higher economic and growth-related level (Kimourtzis, 2016). Actually, the Greek «performance» suggests a relative weakness of the Greek education system, as well as a conscious choice on the part of Greek scientists for integration into an «educational and scientific» elite that has been shaped and trained abroad, and in particular in the USA³.
- d. The presence of Greek students overseas dropped during the period of the onset of the recent economic crisis. It shrank not only in comparison with other countries (due to the upsurge in the number of students chiefly from China and India), but also in absolute size. This does not mean that it lost importance, it means that due to the weakness of «low» incomers and the difficulties of the «middle» income Greek households to cover the relevant costs, the choice of studies overseas has become restricted to the social groups who assign high value to studies, as well as to the economic elite who maintain a relative potential⁴. In parallel however this is linked to the

³ In the twenty years between 1991 and 2011 2,479 PhDs were awarded to Greeks in the USA, 3,986 to Germans, 2,669 to English students, 2,245 to Italians and 2,056 to French. The main bulk of PhDs were awarded to Greeks in the 1990s. After 2000 the number of PhDs that were acquired by Greeks dropped significantly: on average 96 per year between 2000 and 2011, in contrast to 147 between 1991 and 1999 respectively.

⁴ According to Kimourtzis (2016) «spending of Greek households on overseas studies seems to follow the economic developments and so – to an extent – the crisis has brought about a greater restriction in the capabilities of the households to support overseas studies abroad. Until 2007, the relevant spending was especially high, reaching 385.5 million euro, which represented 24.2% of household spending on tertiary education. In 2008 the upward course was interrupted, noting an abrupt fall in spending, as much as an absolute number (233.2 million euro), as well as a % of spending on tertiary education (15.5%). Data for 2013 show a new shrinkage [...] to 118.3 million euro in 2013 [...]. Parallel to this however, the expansion of tertiary education, especially

choice of these students to remain abroad so as to improve their chances of staffing businesses, research centers, and universities overseas. So, the trend which began in the 80s was consolidated and intensified in the 90s, while in the period of the crisis it seems to focus in a way that permits the shaping of an elite of employees of knowledge or capital that chooses to operate beyond the Greek borders.

- e. Contemporary mobility up until the crisis was most likely of a temporary nature, while it seems that the crisis is shaping new conditions in terms of the prolonging of the length of time spent overseas. This occurs either because there are no alternative opportunities in Greece or because this prolonging appears to be linked to the acquisition of relevant professional experience, so that in the case of a return to Greece they will be facilitated in finding desirable employment. It is indicative that in the case of PhD holders from American universities, after graduation a tendency to remain has been recorded. In particular, this trend on the part of the Greeks is obviously comparable, although generally to a lesser degree, with PhD holders who come from the EU. More than 6/10 of Greek S & T doctors in the USA plan to remain in the country after gaining their degree. In cases that concern a permanent decision this is linked either to the realization of some post doc research or to a definite plan to work in the USA (Kimourtzis, 2016).

To sum up, it appears that in previous years a “reservoir” with a significant number of highly specialized Greeks with university overseas studies has “accumulated” abroad (and continues to do so). Furthermore, this is comparable with the case in other European countries, whereas this is noteworthy if one takes into account the relatively smaller Greek population. Also, despite fluctuations⁵, it is estimated that there is significant student mobility as well as a sizeable presence in the greatest educational destinations. In general, Greek student mobility abroad concerned a reasoned economic choice, as well as being attributed to the constant social value attached to education.⁶ At the same time, it was linked to the expectation of education on a global level, the acquisition of a personal cultural experience, as

the increase in the possibility of gaining a postgraduate title at master’s level, as well as a PhD, seems to provide a “safe” choice for households that in the past would probably have had greater flexibility in their choices between home and overseas, especially in cases where entry to a Greek institute of higher education required a change of place of residence. Data for household spending on tertiary education which concerns IHE, Master, and PhD support this: 59.9 million euro in 2004, 175.5 million euro in 2013 after two especially high increases in two critical years of the crisis (that is, 2009 and 2012). Of course, we shouldn’t rule out other factors, such as the increase in fees at popular destinations (for example there were significant increases in the United Kingdom as much in 2006, as in 2012), fluctuations in the exchange rate and/or the turn to new destinations overseas where there are no fees».

⁵ I.e. traditional destinations (such as United States and the United Kingdom) are complemented by others which were less common until now, while the outcome of the Brexit proceedings between the United Kingdom and the EU, will possibly create a different dynamic in the coming years.

⁶ Although the picture started to change even before the onset of the crisis, as it became all the more difficult for people to travel many of the traditional routes which lead to upward professional mobility.

well as to improving credentials that could create better professional prospects and high income.⁷ Nonetheless, in the case of certain groups, this mobility was governed by the spirit of the continuation of a family tradition and the reproduction of social and cultural capital. Thus, today's crisis seems to affect the number of students moving abroad for studies, most likely at the level of undergraduate studies and without doubt for destinations with fees and a high cost of living. At the same time, while bearing in mind the sudden drop in household income, it should be highlighted that access to international education has become more promising for young Greeks deriving from a privileged background in terms of economic comfort (with access to self-funding), as well as for those who are privileged cognitively (with access to scholarships).

5.2. *The value of the degree: Individual endorsement, social reproduction and its symbolic power*

One claim is that the degree does not carry the weight that many imagine it to. In contrast, it appears to confirm the political, economic or political position of the upspring or of the families that are already in a privileged position. Consequently, we can suppose that the degree does not constitute in itself a source of power, beyond, of course, its symbolic dimension. It functions more complementarily, as an additional qualification and as collateral for those who possess other kinds of capital which grant power.

On the other hand, at times, as in the first decades of the 20th century, as well as today, many students, even those who hold socially valued degrees, could not find a job easily and remained unemployed for a period of time. Indicatively, in 1925, a year of economic growth (due to the presence of Asia Minor refugees), indeed at a time when degrees were still scarce, the example of chemistry – an internationally renowned field – revealed that one in ten chemists who studied abroad was unemployed⁸.

However, the possession of a degree adds power to one's personal course, especially in two periods: from the beginning of the 1860s until the mid-1890s, and from the end of 1950s until the mid-1980s. A common feature of these periods is the upward structural social mobility. In other words, due to the combination of family and state reformations, the social strata changed, while as population groups

⁷ For example, USA comprises an important destination for S&T studies and the creation of a global reservoir of talented individuals, while also being a constant pole of attraction as it provides those possibilities which allow further remaining in the USA. Hence, for Greek S&T PhD holders, there is a high chance that residence after graduation will be their first choice, for additional reasons that concern the higher income level in the USA, as well as Greece's inability to «absorb» those returning.

⁸ The Union of Greek Chemists, with 562 recorded chemists, provided the following picture: 30% of the total stated that they were unemployed. The lowest percentage (4.5%) appeared among graduates of the Roussopoulos Academy (it had closed in 1922 with the death of its founder). This was followed by chemists from NTUA (9.7%), chemists from overseas universities (10.5%) and chemists from the University of Athens (45%) (Agriantoni, 2002, pp. 279-80).

passed into other professional and social categories. Graduates benefited from such circumstances, since the degree served as a gateway towards upward mobility.

During the first and even more in the second period, shortages in certain professions, along with the simultaneous state expansion led to the increase in demand for degrees, as well as immediate absorption of graduates. In the first period, the role of the communities was significant, as they attracted doctors, lawyers and teachers. At the same time, state expansion and the increased need for civil servants added to the increased demand, in an environment dominated by the cashless economy since the majority of the population was farmers.

This trend became much more evident after the 1960s. The fast pace of economic growth, from 1958 until the 1973 oil crisis, effected demand for studies and the career prospects for graduates. The increase in students at home – although significant in absolute numbers, however limited compared to other western countries – couldn't meet demand, as only a small percentage of high school graduates became admitted to Greek tertiary education. On the contrary, all the more secondary education graduates chose institutions abroad for their tertiary studies. Amongst them, institutions in Italy, which for more than a decade constituted the main destination for Greek students.

The demand for studies was generated by economic growth and structural upward social mobility. The noteworthy increase in income allowed many social groups, like farmers, even those that were not well-off, to send their children to tutorial schools in the country's urban centres, or directly overseas. This «investment», if measured in economic terms, usually paid off. After their studies, those who finished found employment without delay as freelancers or as civil servants. Economic growth, and more so the way this took place, gave impetus to professions, like the civil engineer and the lawyer as well as to others, wherever there was a lack, i.e. those in health care.

The expansion of the public sector, and in particular, the state, also contributed to this. The need for public services, at a time characterized by the ideological prevalence of the social state, in combination with the search for stability by a state shaken by civil war, led to the expansion of state mechanisms. From K. Tsoukalas studies, we know that postwar state services, either directly or indirectly, absorbed more than 2/3 of higher education graduates (Tsoukalas, 1987, p. 131). In addition, a percentage, mainly of engineers, lawyers and doctors, directed to the private sector which at this juncture was especially rewarding.

This situation had an impact on the shaping and functions of public administration, as well as on the structure of tertiary education. The absorption of the majority of graduates by state mechanisms contributed decisively to the reproduction of the structure of tertiary education.

Despite the 1973 oil and economic crisis, this situation continued until the early 1980s. The first new era (so called «Metapolitefsi»/political changeover after dictatorship) governments, New Democracy, and in particular, PASOK (the Panhellenic Socialist Movement), subsidized the rationale of the welfare state and expanded state mechanisms. So, during this period the state continued to be the principal employer for tertiary education graduates, thus guaranteeing rapid

professional absorption. Actually, this resulted in viewing degrees in a positive light, and hence they were considered worth investing in.

At this time, access to the great educational destinations, like Great Britain, Germany, France and the USA was strengthened (Kiprianos 1995).⁹ These countries comprised powerful poles of attraction for Greek students, easier for the privileged, and still feasible for the other social groups chiefly through the assurance of scholarships, as well as through family capital to the degree that they could support the cost of living, as well as the fees (in places where they existed at that time, see for example the USA).

However, massification of tertiary education after the 1990s, and the gradual withdrawal of the state, grew educational inequalities. This continued after 1997, when the growth rate of students in Greece was one of the highest in the European Union. In these conditions, despite the rhetoric surrounding the university as a mainspring for growth and the foundation of a meritocratic society, the degree lost part of its magic, and functioned more as a protective measure against social marginalization and weighed less than ever in the shaping of dominant groups.

6. Could it be a paradigm shift? Some Reflections

Studies overseas always held a particular symbolic power for dominant groups. The attraction of foreign students (like Greeks) to universities abroad is a complex issue and it displays a differentiated set of features depending on the context. It was linked with curricula quality, the prestige of the universities and above all the ranking of the university in international listings. At the same time, more and more students at well-known institutions overseas acquired «credentials» (competitive advantage, greater prestige) gaining a powerful symbolic impact after the end of their studies. Others have seen these studies as an element of a cosmopolitan approach (for example, living in one of the global cities such as London, New York, Paris or the scientific hubs like Boston, California, Pennsylvania or Massachusetts), as well as an opportunity to gain experience and involvement with the foreign or culturally other (Nowicka & Rovisco, 2009) and a chance for integration into a globalized environment. In addition, transnational and international organizations (e.g., OECD, UNESCO, EU, World Bank) promote the exchange of practices, the convergence of views, and the mutual understanding of systems in such a way as to constitute a vehicle for the introduction of educational policies that shift the center of weight from a national level to that of global educational competition.

Thus, a globalized education space is emerging which provides knowledge but, more than this, it provides skills for one to function within the context of a global economy, it classifies academic institutions in terms of their ability to provide this and it encourages participation in transnational educational and professional networks, creating networks of *alumni* who have from the outset accepted the terms of participation. Finally, along these lines a new dynamic is created. This dynamic

⁹ Italy suffered a fairly significant reduction (numerically and as a share), most likely for reasons to do with the country's educational system, as well as due to students turning to countries whose curricula are in one of the more predominant languages.

concerns the accumulation of «symbolic» capital which is accumulated by graduate participation on a global scale, while it ultimately concerns and influences what happens with the national elite.

Hence, while until as late as the beginning of the new millennium, modern Greek state defends an educational system which is aimed at building common forms and categories of beliefs (a national identity), recent developments are indications of an adaptation to something else. The individual is called on to function in a more globalized environment and as a supranational citizen; thus, the student is required to acquire a much wider identity¹⁰. Within this framework, the education of Greek men and women overseas becomes an integral part of stratification where academic qualifications and the specialized skills of their holders, provide opportunities for the acquisition of positions in society and their unequal distribution across different groups within a population.

During recent years, reduction in Greek families' purchasing power, the crisis itself, as well as the disproportionately large number of candidates for scholarships, combined with the fact that the increase in fees and the cost of living comprise inhibitory factors for overseas studies, it becomes clear that the opportunity for choosing overseas studies has been restricted largely to the dominant groups, providing them with a refreshed basis on which to «stand out». In particular, as at the beginning of the crisis, the magnitude of family, cultural, economic and social capital is important when choosing one's educational pathway:

- a. Children who carry with them cultural capital from very early on (e.g. residence, travelling abroad) and whose families possess socio-economic status which assigns high value weight to «finer» studies are more likely to be supported along an educational course overseas.
- b. This is similar to the case where there is a dense social network which could be mobilized for support (friends and family in the desired place of study).
- c. Moreover, since studies abroad are costly, it is true that children from families with a high economic standing, are more likely to have studied at private and/or international primary and secondary schools, and, therefore they have already developed such an orientation. And once again the class dimension (in economic capital terms) does not necessarily lead to this particular study orientation. It is also the other criteria of stratification (cultural, social capital) which are important.
- d. In addition, performance at school can influence choices. High performance can bring scholarships. However, below – than – expected performances can also lead to similar choices as far as certain scientific fields are concerned (e.g. economics, S & T sciences, medicine, and law).

Therefore, the earlier conditions that enabled the acquisition of degrees from overseas have recently been differentiated. It is not just that the degree has lost part of its magic. It is that new and dynamic relationships determine the contemporary reality of mobility for studies outside Greece. Despite the ambitions of the many,

¹⁰ «Humanity» according to Meyer. See Meyer (2007).

ultimately, mobility is feasible for only a few, while the others are held back due to the objective conditions the crisis itself creates. More specifically, at times of crisis, due to the globalization of education and the fact that qualifications become a crucial element of «circulating capital», conditions of unequal access to overseas education are formed. The privilege of choice between global, national and local is all the more linked to the magnitude of the cultural, economic, social and cognitive capital that the individuals (and their families) carry with them, and only a limited part arises from other opportunities. Participation is on a smaller scale, most likely however with groups that possess more homogenized features in relation to the past: a. a group with the characteristics of a globalized cosmopolitan elite, which moves in a space of power and wealth without borders, and b. a second – and clearly more restricted – intermediary and less privileged group in terms of wealth (however, endowed with potential in terms of talent) which competes to take advantage of opportunities despite facing difficulties due to the economic crisis.

7. Bibliography

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